

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 335 357

SP 03² 292

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TITLE Professional Development Schools and Educational Reform: Concepts and Concerns. ERIC Digest 91-2.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-SP-91-2
PUB DATE Sep 91
CONTRACT RI88062015
NOTE 4p.; For a related document, see ED 316 548.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, One Dupont Circle, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20036-1186 (free).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College School Cooperation; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Inservice Teacher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; *Professional Development; *Program Improvement; Public Schools; *Schools of Education; *Student Teaching; Teacher Education Programs
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests; *Professional Development Schools

ABSTRACT

This digest provides an overview of a new institution, the professional development school (PDS), and of its place in improving public schooling. The PDS is the result of a collaboration between universities and local school districts. In recent years, the literature has suggested that public schools as they exist today cannot adequately prepare tomorrow's teachers. A PDS is an exemplary, functioning public school which has as one of its fundamental missions the professional development of preservice, novice, and practicing teachers. The role of the PDS in improving practice and preparing teachers is analogous to the role of teaching hospitals in the medical profession. They are clinical sites where professional standards of practice are developed, refined, and institutionalized; where cohorts of teaching interns participate in structured induction programs; where both teaching practice and induction are knowledge based; and where inquiry, research, and reflection are used to continually test, refine, and expand this knowledge base. Some expressed concerns are: the cost of operating a PDS; the low esteem in which teacher education programs are held by the academic establishment; possible problems caused by differential treatment of teachers in the PDS; and the relatively few sites in the PDS network. (LL)

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ED335357

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM:
CONCEPTS AND CONCERNS
ERIC Digest 91-2

by

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education

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Professional Development Schools and Educational Reform: Concepts and Concerns

Ismat Abdal-Haqq

This digest provides an overview of an emerging institution, the professional development school (PDS), and of its place in improving public schooling. Conceptually, a PDS is an exemplary, functioning school, generally a public school, which has as one of its fundamental missions the professional development of preservice, novice, and practicing teachers. (See ERIC Digest 89-4, *The Nature of Professional Development Schools*, ED 316 548.)

There are several labels for schools that embody this concept as well as different views of the scope of PDS activities. A Rand study suggested that school districts designate certain schools as **induction schools** to provide supervised internships for beginning teachers (Wise et al., 1987). The American Federation of Teachers has implemented pilots of **professional practice schools** (Levine, 1988). The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee proposed legislation, the "Professional Development Academy Establishment Act of 1989," which would have funded collaboratives between public schools and higher education institutions to provide teacher induction, inservice training, and testing of new teaching techniques (U.S. Congress, 1989). The term **professional development school** appears in the 1986 Holmes Group report, *Tomorrow's Teachers*, and these schools are the focus of its report, *Tomorrow's Schools* (Holmes Group, 1990). The Carnegie Report, *A Nation Prepared*, proposed **clinical schools** (Carnegie Forum, 1986). The U.S. Department of Education has included in its FY 1992 budget a proposal calling for funding of a new program, Partnerships for Innovative Teacher Education. These college/school partnerships would plan and operate **teaching schools** that would be analogous to teaching hospitals (Department Proposes, 1991). Other labels include **professional development center** (Clark, 1990), **practice school**, and **partner school** (Goodlad, 1990).

Although it incorporates elements of each, a PDS is meant to be more than a laboratory school, a model school, or a setting for clinical supervision of novice teachers. It is considered to be a new institution (Holmes, 1990).

Rationale

Reform literature in recent years has suggested that public schools as they exist today do not adequately prepare American youth for their roles as citizens and workers in the twenty-first century (Kennedy, 1990). The structure of many public schools inhibits knowledge-based teaching practice; as a result, student learning may be inhibited. Since existing schools provide the setting for field experiences and student teaching, the prevailing school culture not only fails to promote student learning but also fails to nourish the development of expertise in preservice and novice teachers (Clark, 1990; Murphy, 1990). In essence,

today's schools cannot adequately prepare tomorrow's teachers.

PDSs are generally engaged in the process of restructuring. This process may involve changes in organizational and governance structures; redesign of teacher work; reallocation of resources; improvements in the processes of teaching and learning; and changes in the relationships between and among teachers, administrators, school districts, pupils, parents, and higher education institutions (Murphy, 1990). The objective of this process is to develop models or prototypes of exemplary schools with institutional structures that support improved social and academic learning for pupils and improved practice for teachers (Kennedy, 1990; Levine, 1988). PDSs are places to determine what works so that findings can be disseminated to other schools. As such, these schools are intended to play a pivotal role in restructuring public schooling.

As models of developing best practice, PDSs also become the most effective locations for clinical training of future teachers. There is considerable evidence that teachers consider their student or practice teaching experiences to be the most powerful element in their professional preparation (Goodlad, 1990; Levine, 1988). There is also considerable evidence of the unstructured and idiosyncratic nature of the general run of such field experiences. The net result appears to be that the perceived shortcomings of traditional teaching practice are perpetuated in part by the preservice teacher's initial practice teaching experience (Levine, 1988; Murphy, 1990). PDSs are envisioned as sites where structured induction of preservice teachers, as well as continuing professional development of experienced teachers, is a priority. Therefore, PDSs play a pivotal role in redesigned and improved pre- and inservice teacher education.

Principles and Goals

Although a number of pilot projects have been undertaken in the past few years, there appears as yet to be no fully developed PDS. In fact, creators of PDSs often stress that their efforts will require not only time to bear fruit, in the form of improved teaching practice and student learning, but also a significant amount of time to reach the level where they function as planned. What does exist are models of elements of PDSs and sites that are in the initial planning and implementation stages (Holmes, 1990; Levine, 1988; Pasch & Pugach, 1990). An examination of PDS literature reveals several common themes with regard to principles and goals.

1. The role of PDSs in improving practice and preparing teachers is analogous to the role of teaching hospitals in the medical profession (Darling-Hammond, 1989; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes, 1990; Kennedy, 1990; Zimpher, 1990). These schools



are clinical sites where professional standards of practice are developed, refined, and institutionalized (Darling-Hammond, 1989; Levine, 1988); where cohorts of teaching interns participate in structured induction programs (Goodlad, 1990); where both teaching practice and induction are knowledge based (Darling-Hammond, 1989; Levine, 1988); and where inquiry, research, and reflection are used to continually test, refine, and expand this knowledge base (Darling-Hammond, 1989; Holmes, 1990; Kennedy, 1990).

2. At PDS sites the entire school is involved in the induction of the preservice and the novice teacher, not just a single cooperating or master teacher (Anderson, in press; Clark, 1990; Goodlad, 1990; Pasch & Pugach, 1990; Zimpher, 1990).

3. PDSs are context oriented; sites should reflect the geographic, ethnic, and economic diversity of the nation's student population (Holmes, 1990; Pasch & Pugach, 1990; Zimpher, 1990).

4. The number of designated PDS sites will be relatively small since preparation and induction of new teachers will not be the mission of most schools (Holmes, 1990).

5. The establishment and operation of PDSs is the result of collaboration between universities and local school districts (Holmes, 1990; Kennedy, 1990; Pasch & Pugach, 1990). In some collaboratives, teachers unions are also partners (Anderson, in press; Levine, 1988).

Concerns

1. Many proposed PDS activities and methods may consume considerable resources (Zimpher, 1990). For example, a collaborative model of clinical experiences for preservice teachers generally costs both the university and school district more time, money, and personnel than the traditional student teaching model (Anderson, in press).

2. Some aspects of university culture inhibit the faculty involvement in school affairs that is called for in PDS collaboratives. Often teacher education programs do not enjoy high esteem or priority within schools of education, especially program activities associated with school-based field experience and service (Goodlad, 1990). Faculty evaluation systems have not traditionally rewarded field service by teacher educators at a level on par with other professorial activities (Kennedy, 1990).

3. Aspects of school culture may also inhibit PDS planning and implementation. Rosaen and Hoekwater (1990) point out that school culture is characterized by egalitarian treatment of teachers. Differential treatment, as reflected in the differentiated staffing plans characteristic of some PDSs, is sometimes seen as favoritism. Collegial and collaborative inquiry into practice may also be challenged. "[T]he ethic of social harmony, plus the ethic of autonomy in the classroom, means that it's extremely difficult, even within a school, to say nothing of between a school and a university, to really examine practice together in a serious way" (Kennedy, 1990, p. 13).

4. The proposed PDS network would contain relatively few sites; therefore, preservice teachers may face strong competition

for positions as interns. This potential competition and selectivity raises issues of fairness and equity with regard to resource allocation and professional access (Zimpher, 1990).

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This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U. S. Department of Education, under contract number RI 88062015. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department.

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